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ABSTRACT

The history of educational development in Thailand shows a transition from early concern for religious and moral training toward the present emphasis on the practical development of individuals and society. Thai culture may have originated in Mongolia and has been strongly affected by its present cultural neighbors, Malaya, Cambodia, Laos, Burma, and India. Thai cultural character has been shaped by a strong monarchical tradition, the adoption of Buddhism, and a consciousness of the individual. The origins of education in Thailand were religious, encouraged by the monarchy. The 1870's saw the beginning of modern secular education, leading to the inclusion of women and the general public in the educational process. This document's historical presentation concentrates on the structure, curricular emphasis, and administrative organization of the educational system after World War II. A brief analysis of current Thai educational thought reveals continuing Buddhist influence. The document concludes with a general overview of the present educational situation in Thailand, including socioeconomic factors, and indicates problem areas requiring further change. (Author/PGD)

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EDUCATION IN THAILAND:

From Old to New

Sirmsree Servatamorn

WORLD EDUCATION MONOGRAPH SERIES

Number Two

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EDUCATION IN THAILAND: FROM OLD TO NEW

Modern Thailand is located in Southeast Asia and occupies approximately 128,500 acres, or 200,148 square-miles, with a population of thirty-six million people.[1] At present, Thailand is in its third Five-Year National Development Plan (1972-1976) which aims to expand the previous plans that began in 1961.[2] These plans have called for improving infrastructure activities such as irrigation, transportation, health, and sanitation. Moreover, industrial investments by private enterprise have been encouraged by providing loans for these improvements. Emphasis is made on the development of human resources and on improving conditions in the rural areas. The development plans have attempted to integrate educational and socio-economic programs by expanding and improving vocational education and technical training.[3]

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1 Newspaper Enterprise Association, The World Almanac 1974. New York: Newspaper Enterprise Association Inc., 1974. p. 603.

2 The calendar years used in this research have been translated to the A.D. calendar. In Thailand, Buddhist calendar years are used. It is 543 years more than the Christian era, e.g. the year 1964 in the Western world will be the year 2507 in Thailand.

3 Prayad Buranasiri. National Development Plans in Thailand. Bangkok, Thailand, 1967.

Governmental reports show a satisfactory increase of per capita income after the period of the first and second plans.[4] Other reports, however, indicate that wealth and prosperity have been shared only among a small group of people and not among the farmers.[5] Besides, absentee landlordism has become one of the government's most urgent problems even though 85% of the total farmland in Thailand was still owner-occupied during the last decade.[6] Another issue that comes as a consequence of the new consumption and recreation habits influenced by Western culture has to do with the concern over the future of Thai society. Today Thai culture has become a mixture of the Oriental and Occidental. Many observers, both Thais and outsiders, are wondering about the future of Thailand in this modern technological era.

As for the form of government, the bloodless 1932 revolution transformed an absolute monarchy, which had ruled the country until then, into a constitutional monarchy. The government, however, has been dominated by the elite groups since 1932. At present, the elite is not limited to the royal family and the traditional bureaucracy but includes many who are able to rise to the top in military,

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4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., and Asian Students, March 18, 1972.

6 Ministry of National Development, Thailand: Facts and Figures 1965. Bangkok: Department of Technical and Economic Cooperation, 1965. p. 6.

government, business, religion, and other professions. With an exception of a three-month interim government in 1957, the Thai government was headed by the military elite between 1948 and late 1973. After the bloody riots in October, 1973, a rector of a leading university was appointed Prime Minister to head the provisional government until the next general election in January 1975. During this interim era, the constitution was suspended, redrafted, and repromulgated many times. The eighth constitution that had been drafted since 1959 under Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat's leadership as Prime Minister (1958-1963) was only formalized in 1968 during the leadership of Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn (1964-1973). Political parties were permitted again according to the 1968 constitution. But not long after the general election of 1969, the country was again put under rule by military decree. After the October 1973 rebellion, the constitution was redrafted once more and the ninth constitution was announced for implementation in October 1974.[7]

It is evident from the discussion above that democratic ideology, toward which some of the Thai elite have been striving, actually has never been fully embraced in Thailand. Therefore, formal educational programs, mass media, and other methods should play a major role in increasing the people's

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7 Office of the Public Relations Attache, Thai Weekly News, The Royal Thai Embassy, Washington D.C., October 11, 1974, p. 1.

political awareness in this era of high political involvement and interest in the country. The problem of lack of commitment toward democratic ideology is recognized by the Thai government and is one of its central concerns. In an improved educational and social atmosphere, it is hoped that the Thais would become more aware of their socio-political rights and responsibilities and also implement them for their own betterment as individuals and for the Thai society in general.

Besides extolling the three "organs of the country", as the nation, religion, and kingship are termed, and promoting democracy, recent governmental policy statements also express massive concerns for agricultural production, the welfare of the farmers, and the needs of the general public. These statements urge developing a strong military capability in order to protect the nation from both internal[8] and external dangers, and seek to bring about understanding and unity among the various ethnic groups in the nation.

Ethnic Thais comprise most of Thailand's population. The major minority groups in Thailand are the Chinese and the Malays. Most of the 4.5 million Chinese speakers live

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8 Thailand has been facing the problem of guerrilla fighting commonly known as "Communist Subversion", in its forest areas. It is now recognized that one of the major causes is the dissatisfaction of some rural Thais with their welfare.

in urban areas. Their representatives, however, are found throughout the country. They are well-known as retail vendors and rice brokers in the rural areas. Although ordinary Thais often regard the Chinese as overly-different and excessively ambitious in financial matters, acculturation to Thai behavior patterns is common among the second and third generation Chinese. For one reason, they are Thai citizens by birth and most of them consider themselves Thais. Besides, frequent intermarriage between ethnic Thais and the Chinese contributes to the assimilative processes. Some observers have explained that this peaceful assimilation is due to the similarity of Thai and Chinese value systems. The foundations of both are paternalism and a reciprocal repayment of kindness between patrons and subordinates[9].

Whereas Chinese children attend schools where the central Thai dialect is a medium of teaching and fully follow the government educational program, the situation in the Malay-speaking group is quite different. Over one million Malays live along the Thai-Malaysian border in the South. This most homogeneous minority group is highly resistant

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9 Ralph Thomlinson. Thailand's Population: Facts, Trends, Problems, and Politics. Bangkok: Thai Watana Panich Press Co., 1971. p. 34.

to assimilation into the national culture and thus to government sponsored education. Being a Malay means being a Muslim and speaking Malay. Instruction in the Buddhist principles which must be given in all government schools is unacceptable in Muslim areas. Most school-age youngsters become bilingual because of the requirement of central Thai dialect as the teaching medium. Yet some schools in these areas continue to use Malay for teaching and learning. This bilingual problem continues to the present time.

Governmental concern has also been given for the education and welfare of other minority groups. For instance, the different hill tribes, approximately one-quarter of a million of whom reside in the northern and Burmese-border areas, have their own indigenous languages. Other minority groups are: about one-quarter of a million Cambodians living in border areas close to Cambodia; fewer than 100,000 each of Indians, Pakistanis, Japanese, Europeans, Americans, Vietnamese, Laotians; and a few hundred of Negritos or Semang close to the Thai-Malay border.[10]

The recent discovery of Communist insurgents among the Meo, one of the hill tribes, and Communist terrorism in the South, initiated by ethnic Chinese from Malaysia,

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10 Ibid.

accelerated the Thai government's program for developing unity within the society through displaying concern for people's welfare and education. Government policy calls for increasing the teaching of ethics and culture along with educating for democracy and expanding opportunities for vocational training.[11] The budget for fiscal year 1975 puts emphasis on economics, education, and defense in this respective order of priority.[12] While complete freedom in religions is guaranteed,[13] Thailand is striving for a well integrated and unified national society. Up to this period, it should be pointed out, the Thais perceive that their country has not experienced harassment in dealing with its ethnic minorities as has frequently occurred in other nations.

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11 Pracha Thippatai (Democracy) A Daily Newspaper, Bangkok, Thailand, June 7, 1974.

12 Office of the Public Relations Attache, Thai Weekly News, June 19, 1974. p. 1.

13 The Department of Religious Affairs reveals recently that 93.6% of people are Buddhists, 3.9% are Muslims, 0.6% are Christians, and 1.9% are Hindus, Sikhs, Braminists and others. Pracha Thippatai (Democracy), A Daily Newspaper, Bangkok, Thailand, February 4, 1974.

Thai Society

Where the Thais originated is still in much dispute. One study states the view shared by most of the Thai people:

> Ancient Chinese records mention the Thai in the pre-Christian era as a nomadic race drifting southward from the Altai mountains in Mongolia where they presumably originated... To escape Chinese domination many Thai drifted southward toward the area that today comprises Southeast Asia...the Thai established their first kingdom at Nanchao in Yunnan Province [south of mainland China] around 650 A.D.... As early as the ninth century A.D. many Thai began emigrating beyond the mountains south of Nanchao into the region that today comprises Laos, northern Thailand, and the Shan States of Burma. In 1253, the famous Mongol emperor Kublai Khan defeated the kingdom at Nanchao and a large number of Thai were pushed southward beyond the area already occupied by the early Thai settlers. These people became the founders of the kingdom of Thailand. Descending along Me Ping [Ping River] they came upon the thriving Khmer Kingdom of the Cambodian people at Sukhothai. They quickly overwhelmed the Khmers and established Sukhothai as the first capital in their new homeland. Many Thai moved further southward and occupied much of the territory along the Chao Praya River inhabited by the Khmers and the Mons...[14]

The Thais adopted Khmer forms of art and architecture which, in turn, had been influenced by Indian culture. After extensive contact with the Mons and people of Sri Lanka, the Sukhothai kingdom[15] led by its third king,

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14 Frank C. Darling. Thailand: The Modern Kingdom. Singapore: Asia Pacific Press, 1971. pp. 1-2. Phrases in brackets were added by the author.

15 The Thais designate the periods of their history according to the name of the capital cities of each period, i.e. Sukhothai (1257-1350), Ayuttha (1350-1767), and later Thonburi (1768-1781), and Bangkok (1782-).

King Ramkamhang (1283-1317), adopted Hinayana Buddhism. Following the Mons' fundamental law called Thammasat, the Sukhothai patriarchal tradition established the ideal ruler as "a king of righteousness who ruled his people with justice and upheld the ten kingly virtues including alms-giving, morality, liberality, rectitude, gentleness, self-restriction, non-anger, non-violence, forbearance, and non-obstruction.[16]

In the next period, namely the Ayuttaya, Brahmanism which had been brought into the Khmer kingdom by Indian merchants and missionaries began to be infused into the Thai tradition. The monarch became divine and was revered with elaborate rituals and ceremonies.[17] A highly stratified system developed along with strong authoritarianism. The king assumed the title of "Lord of Life," or "Lord of the Land"[18]. Nonetheless, one might have found true then, and now, what Vella wrote in 1955:

> Thailand was not in any respect a strong unitary state and the relations between the government and the people were therefore extremely loose. There was a vast difference between the absolute monarchy's ideal of centralization and the fact...The problem of provincial control was real...poor transportation

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16 Darling, p. 3.

17 Ibid., p. 5.

18 After the fifteenth century, the land was allotted to the people according to their social ranks. This abolished system was known as Sakdina.

and communication facilities made a large degree of decentralization of power inevitable.[19]

How Thailand became known as "Siam" is also unknown due to the lack of any exact source. However, Darling asserts:

> During the early Ayuttaya period the kingdom became known for the first time as Siam... The Chinese applied the term "Sien" to the Sukhothai kingdom; the Burmese called the Thai people in the northern provinces the Shans. The Khmers used the word "Syam" or "Savage" depicting the Thai, and the Chams used the same term for Thai prisoners of wars...But they the Thai themselves called their country "Muang Thai" or Thailand from the beginning meaning Land of the Free...[20]

In 1939 the term Siam, which had officially been used since the reign of King Mongkut of Bangkok (1851-1868), was changed to Thailand. This change corresponded with the patriotic movement of the period. It was justified by the fact that the country had been able to maintain political independence from Western imperialism during the nineteenth century, while neighboring countries such as Burma to the West and Malysia to the South had become English colonies and while Laos and Cambodia to the North and East were absorbed into French Indo-China.

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19 Quoted in Fred W. Riggs, Thailand: The Modernization of a Bureaucratic Policy. Honoluli: East-West Center Press, 1966. p. 95.

20 Darling, p. 6.

Although this relative independence was validated by a British-French agreement to let Thailand remain a buffer state between their colonial empires,[21] the Thai knew perfectly well the hardship that two Thai kings of the era, King Mongkut (1851-1868) and his son, King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910), had gone through. Both handled the English and French by giving them some of the protectoral lands.[22] The four northern states of Malaysia (Perlis, Kedah, Kelanan, and Trengganu) were ceded to England, and parts of Laos and Cambodia went to France. The shrewdness of the two kings in handling the situation is highly regarded by all Thais. Furthermore, their efforts to bring Thailand "up-to-date," especially in education, were most remarkable.

Throughout Thai history, whether during Sukhothai patriarchism, Ayuttaya and early Bangkok absolutism, or the present constitutional monarchy, the Thai kings, with few exceptions, have truly and strongly been the leaders of national affairs in all aspects. This has been especially true in religion, literature, and education and had been true in the military realm until the end of the eighteenth century. King Ramkamhang of Sukhothai, for instance, invented the Thai written language in 1283 by adapting elements from Cambodian scripts and from the Pali and Sanskrit

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21 Banning Garrett, "Dominoization of Thailand" Ramparts, November 1970, p. 1.

22 See map in Appendix C.

languages. Such a task and many others which he performed in order to develop the basis of Thai culture made him one of the great kings of Thai history. Kingship has remained respectable to most Thais. Today the Thai people are still accustomed to paternal rule and always hope to follow the authority of the leaders whom they trust to be strong, kind, and just. This attitude may very well influence the common Thai characteristic of non-involvement in political and other governmental matters.

The Thai people's individualistic way of life is supported by two factors: (1) the Buddhist code of ethics by which one develops one's individual self to live harmoniously in one's society, and (2) confidence in their country's abundance of food and natural resources. A common saying passed down from the earliest history of Thailand is, "Nai nam me pla; nai na me khao," or "Wherever there is water, there are fish; wherever there is a field, there is rice." However, with an annual population growth rate of 3.3%,[23] ever increasing efforts must be made to feed the Thai people. Such individualism encouraged a loosely structured social system. It is a system made up of independent and autonomous

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23 Office of the Public Relations Attache. Thai Weekly News, July 19, 1974. p. 8. The latest report from the later issue of the same source shows the effectiveness of the population control program which was brought the rate down to 2.8%. It is hoped that the rate can be reduced to 2.0% within the next decade.

individuals. Each Thai goes his own way at his own time. One may note that regularity and subservience to time are absent.[24] The Thais lead comfortable lives at a comfortably steady pace.

A recent survey also indicated that members of the bureaucracy put more value on traditional Thai virtues such as being benevolent, calm, self-assured, authoritative toward subordinates, and respectful, attentive, and compliant toward superiors, than they do on westernized bureaucratic attributes: technical competence, intelligence, and skills in decision making.[25] Needless to say, however, urban values are affected by Western culture. Many people now put more value on the ability to speak a Western language in order to show familiarity with Western manners. A display of Western-style consumer durables indicates wealth.

It is important to note that in the past, although Thai culture assimilated and modified many other cultures such as the Chinese and Indian, and the Western during the recent modernizing period, that it remains distinctive and individual. In the expectation of most Thais, it will continue to be self-sustaining. In the Thai society, each individual seldom sees himself as an equal to those around him.

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24 Thomlinson, p. 13.

25 John W. Henderson, et al. AREA Handbook for Thailand. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971. p. 64.

Expression in language, gesture, and posture show the pattern of social interaction in this elaborate hierarchy of status. But there is freedom for both the superior and subordinates to terminate the relationship. This freedom holds true even in the family system which is operated on the concept of a mutual obligation of loving care and obedience between the older and the younger. Children acknowledge their debt to parents and elder siblings for their care and protection. It is common, then, to see the Thais caring for their aged relatives. Each side, superiors in relation to subordinates, older toward younger, or even friends with friends, must be careful in their interactions.

The concept of a Thai word, krengchai, whose inclusive meaning cannot be adequately explained in a single English term, is regarded as the center of proper interactive atmosphere. Krengchai connotes "The desire to be self-effacing, respectful, humble, and extremely considerate, as well as the wish to avoid embarassing other people, intruding, or imposing upon them."[26] It is also one of the terms that reflect other highly regarded personal virtues--mildness, non-aggression, and self-control which are, in other words, moderation and serenity.

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26 Ibid., pp. 78-79.

Implied in the values mentioned above is gratitude, another value strongly inculcated by Buddhism. It is this value that creates the extended or kin family in Thailand. In many cases, however, each nuclear family has its own house and its own separated economy. Still, close relationships among the different generations give a child in a typical Thai home opportunities to mingle with people of all ages and experiences, sharing family responsibility at an early age. The young usually have no regular chores except caring for their baby brothers and sisters until they reach fifteen or sixteen years of age when, if they do not attend schools, they start to take on a full workload. This typical pattern can be observed in all rural areas. Children are permitted to mature gradually at their own pace without severe strain.

Since the early twentieth century, secular education has increasingly replaced the traditional Buddhist institutions. The secular educational authorities see the importance of moral education for the young, so they have placed Buddhist ethics as a subject in the official school program of study. Its purpose is to inculcate the personal and social values of this predominantly Buddhist society.

Obedience and respectful behavior toward teachers, to give some examples, occur daily in Thai schools and precede all the classroom activities. The traditional act of paying respect to teachers by their pupils is an annual ceremony in schools all over the country. This general respect for seniority and authority may be carried to an extreme when the individuals ignore their rights to participate in decision-making processes and fail to express their opinions. It can undermine the freedoms of act and speech that are central to the democratic ideology for which Thailand is striving. Thus, there need to be ways of combining the prevailing traditional individualism with the new ideas of representative government.

Obviously, the existing individualism in the Thai society does not imply opposition toward central authority or free speech and free press as in the Western society. Rather, these latter goals are being sought for and Thai individualism merely means personal freedom to live in a reasonable, happy and peaceful social context. Perhaps, individual inputs that contribute to such social environment are, to a great extent, influenced by Buddhism.

According to the Buddhist world-view, as Dr. Saroj Buasri explains, during the period in which he was the

Director-General of Teachers Training Department in the Ministry of Education, the world or life has three common characteristics. They are change (anicca), suffering (dukkha), and nothingness or void (anatta). Nothing stays the same. There is no real permanent or unchanging self or soul. "A being or I is merely a changing combination of physical and mental phenomena...with this understanding of these principles, there should be no sorrow nor fear, when the objects change and perhaps return to nothingness."[27] One must deal with the world or life with wisdom (pañña or panya) so that one will not be the slave of life or of the world. One must look at things as they truly are. For instance, the continuity of human lives both at the individual and at the societal levels follows the law of karma (or the law of cause and effect) beginning with thoughts, values, and attitudes originating in the "mind".[28] Man has an equal right to be man, so there should be no discrimination of birth.[29] Educational processes should produce the kind of people who participate, cooperate

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27 Saroj Buasri. A Philosophy of Education for Thailand: The Confluence of Buddhism and Democracy. Bangkok: Kurusabha Press, 1970. p. 48.

28 Pra Srivisutmoli. "Considerations Pertaining to Thai Philosophy of Education: From the Buddhist Point of View" Journal of the National Education Commission, Philosophy of Education, 1: 7-14, August-September 1973.

29 Ibid.

together, and honor each other. The examples of such Buddhist teachings (dhammas) are "Saraniya Dhammas 6" and "Suppurisa Dhammas 7" as well as other doctrines leading to progress by calling for group meetings to solve problems.[30]

"Buddhism in its pure form rejects imposed authority," claims Buasri.[31] Buddha's teaching known as "Kalama Sutta"[32] would verify this assertation. This teaching conveys that no one should accept any doctrine until he tries it out himself and finds it to be of value for himself and for his fellowmen.

Pra Srivisutmoli, a leading Buddhist monk of contemporary Thailand, further proposes that actual implementation of Buddhist thoughts would help, in a negative aspect, to free a life from problems and, in a positive aspect, would every person able to penetrate the beauty of life and to have more freedom. This free state of life is the state in which one witnesses power within oneself, to do or not to do things. In other words, appropriate ways of life create the life that is dependent on one's disciplined self and able to

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30 Saroj Buasri. "Toward a New Concept of Education for Thailand" in Education in Thailand: A Century of Experience, ed. Ekavidhaya Nathalang. Bangkok: Karnsasana Press, 1970. p. 119.

31 Buasri, Philosophy of Education, p. 43.

32 The Buddha's sermon was originally presented at the town of Kalama.

be of help to others. It is the life that is based on unselfishness (a-lobha), benevolence (a-dosa), and wisdom (a-moha or panya). Generally speaking, it is the life that experiences "wholesome actions" that derive from good deeds, words, and thoughts.

As may be apparent, Thai society already has in it a stress on individualism and structure for expressing social concerns. But more complex phenomena deriving from economical and cultural contact with other people of the world have much affected the previously simple ways of life followed by most of the Thais. Even though they may choose to keep many traditions, they cannot afford to be indifferent to innovation and change. New ways of thinking, or greater emphases on some things that already existed, are needed for them to cope with the problems that are rising or may arise. One task of the schools is to teach new concepts to students and prepare them for life. Social studies education contains many of the ideas and methods of solving problems that the young Thais will need to known in the future.

Educational Background

Thailand's traditional education had its centers in temples or wats. The orientation of this education was mainly moral and religious. Parents who wanted their

sons to be "educated" would send them, sometimes when they were as young as ten years old, to stay with Buddhist monks in the wats. There the boys learned how to read and write. They could, however, return home to work during the farming season. Thus, in past eras most of the formal teaching and learning in the temples was not highly systematic.

Family units had the responsibility for vocational training. While boys learned how to farm and hunt, girls were taught farming as well as domestic skills. Other special skills taught by experts outside the wats were traditional medicine, construction, astrology, magic, the art of self-defense, military arts, folk arts and crafts, and girls' handicrafts.[33]

It can be concluded, then, that traditional learning consisted mainly of moral, vocational, and art education. Learning methods were primarily in the form of memorization and practical experience. Oral instruction and demonstration were the primary teaching techniques. In general, boys and men had greater privileges in moral education and consequently they received more instruction in reading and writing than did the girls. One basic cause of the disparity between the sexes was the fact that Theravada Buddhism did not allow girls to be physically close to the monks. Nevertheless, accounts of the Sukhothai period (1280-1350) indicate that a few women were given an opportunity to become literate.[34]

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33 Swat Chongkol. "A Historical Sketch of Thai Education Administration: Evolution of the Administrative Organization". A Century of Experience, p. 63.

34 Mudhichai Moolsilpa. Reformation of Education in King Rama V. Bangkok: Social Sciences Society of Thailand, 1973. p. 21.

Undoubtedly, in former times, the royal family and their courtiers had a better chance to become literate than did the common people. One of the oldest pieces of Thai literature, Tripoom Pra Ruang,[35] an important source of early Thai historical evidence, emerged from the Sukhothai Court. Another example of the level of literacy in the courts are inscription stones inscribed in the same period which record the Sukhothai culture. Similarly, educational opportunities for the courtiers were greater than those for the masses in the Ayuttaya period (1350-1767), in the early Bangkok period (1782-1851), and also during the modernizing years (1852-1932).

More attention was paid to reading and writing skills after the sixteenth century when the Thai first established contact with Western countries. Most Europeans came to trade, but the French who came in 1663 brought with them the purpose of teaching Christianity and Western culture,[36] and so they set up missionary schools. This was in King Narai's reign (1657-1688), a time when education during the Ayuttaya reached its peak. During this period, the first Thai-language textbook, Chinda Manee, was compiled by one of King Narai's courtiers and it was used until 1871.[37]

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35 There is dispute concerning the author of the book. Some believe King Lithal of Sukhothai wrote it, others say it was written by his royal command.

36 Darling, p. 7.

37 United States Operation Mission. Support to Educational Development in Thailand. Office of Education, Bangkok, 1972. p. 1. (The Mission is hereafter referred to as USOM).

The end of the Ayuttaya era was marked by the Thai-Burmese War in 1767. During this conflict the palace, many temples, public buildings, and most literary works, together with a lot of historical evidence, was destroyed. A great deal of evidence concerning education was undoubtedly destroyed also.

When the capital was moved to Bangkok, therefore, a new emphasis was placed on encouraging cultural development. The first two kings of the Bangkok period, King Rama I (1782-1809) and King Rama II (1809-1824) wrote several books and urged others to do the same. Many literary masterpieces were produced. These included the Ramakien, a Thai version of the Indian classic, Ramayana. But there is little evidence of educational innovations during these reigns.

When King Rama III (Nangklao, 1824-1851) came to the throne, educational centers were established. Many more Buddhist temples were built or reconstructed. The king founded a Buddhist academy in the Temple of the Emerald Buddha and commanded that classical poems, proverbs, and traditional medical instruction be inscribed on the walls of Wat Pra Jetupon. This temple then became an "open university" and is regarded by some to have been the first public university in Thailand.[38]

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38 Ibid., p. 2.

During King Rama III's rule, one of the leading American missionaries, Dr. D. B. Bradley, set up a printing press in 1837 for the purpose of publishing Christian doctrine. It was not until the reign of King Rama IV (Mongkut, 1851-1868) that the first Thai book was printed on the royal printing press.[39] Since then the printing press has contributed greatly to the progress of Thai education. So have the American missionaries who brought with them Western knowledge of medicine and science and introduced graded schooling.

Contact with the West made King Mongkut realize the necessity for the royal children and for those of high-ranking officials to learn foreign languages. Therefore, in 1862 he hired Mrs. Anna W. Leonowens who taught them English in the Grand Palace until 1867.[40] The King's awareness of the importance of education is obvious from the provisions he made for educating the royal children, especially Prince Chulalongkorn. Literature shows that besides English and Thai this prince studied the Pali language, the arts of self-defense and other subjects. From his father Prince Chulalongkorn learned about administration, tradition, and archeology.[41] King Mongkut

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39 Moolsilpa, p. 17.

40 Ibid., pp. 24-26.

41 Ibid., p. 24.

has, therefore, been recognized as the man who laid the foundations of modern education in Thailand and brought about the subsequent period of educational reform.

King Chulalongkorn's role in modernizing Thai education. At the beginning of his reign, King Chulalongkorn (Rama V, 1868-1910) made several trips to foreign countries. In 1870 he went to Singapore and Djakarta and the following year to India, stopping at Singapore, Penang, Rangoon and Calcutta on the way. One outcome of these trips was English-language schools for the children of noblemen. The first modern school was set up at the royal palace in 1871 and was called the Palace School. The three R's and other subjects which would be required in government offices were taught.[42] Chulalongkorn also encouraged both state-run and private schools, including missionary schools. New text-books were written and examinations began to be used as criteria for promotion.

In one of his addresses concerning education the king declared his intention to spread education to the masses.[43] Realizing that slavery[44] retarded the progress of the country,

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42 USOM., p. 3.

43 Committee for Centenary Celebration of the Coronation of King Chulalongkorn. Organization of Education in King Rama V. Bangkok: Kurusabha Press, 1968. p. 20.

44 Bishop Pallagoix, along with other Europeans, noted that slaves in Thailand differed from those in the West because they were well-fed and fairly-treated. (Quoted from Moolsilpa, p. 58)

this king peacefully abolished it. One year later he declared that education would be provided for the former slaves' children. He also ordered every wat to recruit teachers to teach the local children Thai and arithmetic. As a result of their directive, the first school for common people was founded in 1884 at Wat Mahanaparam in Bangkok. During this early stage of development, mass education was begun and largely supported by private citizens and by the wats. It was the first time that mass education through formal schooling took place in the country.

How massive it was is not quite clear. There was no compulsory education then. The better educated segment of the population consisted of the children of aristocrats who obtained a better quality and quantity of teachers and provided them with a more supportive educational atmosphere. When the more systematic national administrative body, the Department of Education, was set up in 1887 and became a full-fledged Ministry five years later, mass education expanded.

According to the 1892 school records, the curriculum for the lower and upper primary levels in government schools included reading, writing, arithmetic, ethics, geography, history, science, art, and music (singing).[45] Private schools,

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45 Moolsilpa, p. 116.

with approval of the Ministry of Education, were allowed to teach these subjects. Special private schools were permitted to teach English, Chinese, and one of the Indian dialects.[46]

In 1895 some reorganization of primary education occurred. Records show that students could then progress at their own pace at the primary level.[47]

A broader national scheme of education was formulated in 1898. It outlined curricular content, established overall grade levels, and included a specific reference to girls' education. Earlier, the main purpose of schooling had been only to train boys for the civil service. After the 1898 scheme was adopted girls had more opportunities to become literate through formal schooling. Girls' schools were being opened, offering subjects similar to those taught to the boys. However, embroidery and homemaking arts were also included in the girls' programs. Possibly the wider educational opportunities for both sexes provided by this scheme were influenced by the king's trip to England and France in 1896 and by his command that the Thai ambassadors of those countries report on their educational systems so that they could be adapted to conditions in Thailand.

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46 Swat Chongkol, "A Historical Sketch" A Century of Experience. p. 66.

47 Ibid., p. 67.

General education included pre-primary, primary, and secondary levels. Six-years of primary education was organized in the temples. Secondary education provided two types of curriculum: a) a four-year secondary program using a Thai curriculum; and b) as eight-year secondary program using a bilingual English-Thai curriculum. Higher education was specialized in producing different types of civil servants, for Thailand had been hiring many Europeans as civil service advisors since the mid-nineteenth century. Teacher-training, civil service preparation, study in the fine arts, and legal, medical, engineering and agricultural studies, were considered specialized education. For the first time, women were trained to become teachers.

The Royal Pages School was established in 1899. It offered a three-year course for boys who had already completed the secondary level at other schools.[48] Later, when its scope was expanded the school's name was changed to the Civil Service Academy. The major educational areas offered were medicine and public administration. Not until seventeen years later, during the reign of King Chulalongkorn's son, Vajiravut (1910-1925), was a Faculty of Engineering and a Faculty of Arts and Science included in the same school. The school was then renamed Chulalongkorn University by King Vajiravut, in

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48 Tej Bunnag. "From Monastery to University: A Survey of Thai Education From 1824 to 1921" in A Century of Experience. p. 10.

honor of his father. Chulalongkorn University became the first modern university in Thailand.

Before the end of King Chulalongkorn's reign, more women had gradually been admitted into different higher educational institutions. Also, more and more schools for the masses at the lower levels were being opened in the wats. Most of them, including the provincial ones, were started by the efforts of the aristocratic elite.

More decentralization of authority in the schools began as a result of the three Thai chief inspectors' study of educational development in Japan in 1902. Moreover, specialized education gained its place in all lower education levels. The government stated in 1902 that it would provide education for all citizens throughout the kingdom. Education would "train the people to be good citizens and to make a living honestly and progressively and would help to maintain the peace and stability of the nation."[49] At that time, the government still had to "persuade" students to enter schools and, later, to enroll in courses other than those that prepared students for civil service. The last aspect still persists as a problem in education today.

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49 Swat Chongkol, "A Historical Sketch," in A Century of Experience. p. 80.

Education after King Chulalongkorn's Reign. In 1921 King Vajiravut promulgated the first Compulsory Education Act which stipulated that all boys and girls were to go to school from the ages of seven through fourteen or until they had completed the four years of primary education. The number of primary schools was greatly increased. Higher education after the secondary level was offered at Chulalongkorn University.

The Revolution of 1932 which marked a change from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy did not change the commitment to education as an important priority. In 1936 the national scheme of education was amended to a 4-3-3-2 form. There now was a four-year primary, three-year lower secondary, three-year upper secondary and two-year pre-university program. Vocational schools (carpentry for boys, arts and crafts for girls) on both secondary levels were established because the government wanted to discourage students from academic study. Those who could not enter the pre-university-level schools could go to higher vocational schools.

Since the end of the Second World War there have continued to be many developments in education for the Thai people. In 1951 the government stated the policy that "education is instrumental in training people to be democratic and healthy citizens, acquiring knowledge and

skills to earn their living efficiently--moral, physical, intellectual, and manual arts education are to be well-harmonized and carefully developed."[50]

An expansion of governmental policy-making regarding education can be observed. As noted above, the earliest purpose of schooling had been to train civil servants. Then, in 1902, education for the masses was extended so that they would be good and honest citizens and hence the social goal of peace and stability of the group could be maintained. Policies after the Second World War emphasized the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for the democratic way of life. These were specified as the development of moral, physical, intellectual, and manual arts education. Since then, two overall goals have remained: peace and a well-harmonized society.

To further expand mass education, the Thai government has accelerated the establishment a great many more educational agencies since 1950. The Department of Elementary and Adult Education was set up in the Ministry of Education in 1951. Adults were, at that early stage, being educated in different occupations free of charge.[51] In 1952 the

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50 Ibid.

51 Ministry of Education. Educational Development in Thailand 1949-1966. Report to International Conferences on Public Education Organized by UNESCO and the International Bureau of Education, Bangkok, 1966. p. 9.

Department of Educational Techniques was founded to serve as an academic and research center for the Ministry. Its scope of work includes research and statistics, developing instructional materials, textbook production, library and museum services, curriculum organization, educational and vocational guidance, and an information service.[52]

In 1953 an experimental comprehensive secondary school for boys and girls was founded at Chacheongsao Province as the result of the investigation conducted early in 1949 by Sir John Sargent and Pedro Crata. But when UNESCO stopped its support in 1959, this pilot project collapsed. Nonetheless, it had an impact on the 1960 general national scheme of education, the formal base of the present Thai educational system. Its impact assured that the "practical arts" now have a place in all secondary school curricula.

Nairn suggested in 1966 that this project had also affected the instructional aspects of Thai education. For example, the practice of class discussion, which had previously been almost completely absent, became more common. Curriculum organization and classroom layouts were improved. In-service training was also given attention by the project and greater autonomy for provincial and

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52 Ibid.

district school systems was encouraged.[53] A more successful comprehensive secondary school program was reestablished experimentally in 1960, as will be discussed shortly.

While the first comprehensive school program was at the experimental stage, vocational education was being improved. The existing carpentry schools in all provinces were made technical or trade schools in 1953 in order to provide more opportunities for vocational training in lower-secondary and upper-secondary levels. But not until later, in 1966, did vocational education receive more attention. Then, the Loan Project for the Improvement of Vocational Education (LIVE) was started. This was a 32 million dollar project with a six million dollar loan supplied by the International Bank for Reconstruction Development (IBRD) and the rest financed by the Royal Thai government. Together with technical assistance from the United States Operation Mission (USOM) the project aimed to develop and improve the programs of ten vocational agriculture schools, fifteen trade and industrial schools, and two vocational teacher training colleges.[54] The lower-secondary vocational schools were to be gradually diminished as more comprehensive secondary schools were to be set up in

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53 Leslie R. Gue. Educational Reorganization in Thailand. Chicago: American Educational Research Association, ERIC Document, 1972. p. 1.

54 USOM, p. 19.

late 1960s and in the 1970s. Eventually, these schools would be converted to provide upper-secondary vocational training (grades 11-12-13) instead. Other examples of educational expansion in recent decades are educational radio service begun in 1954 and the authorization for experts in different fields to write on their particular subjects beginning in 1956.

During the 1950s rural and higher education also received increased attention. The first elementary level boarding school was established in 1954 for children in remote areas. One school of this type was to be set up in each of the twelve educational regions. The Regional Education Development Project including Higher Education (REDPHE) was begun in 1958 and resulted in the organization of more schools in the rural areas. The Police Department contributed by planning to open ninety-two Border Patrol Police Schools on the borders of the country for mountain children in the North and other remote areas.[55] REDPHE as well as the several national development plans, the first inaugurated in 1961, has had a great impact on the foundation of higher education in rural areas. Chiengmai University in the North was founded in 1964, Khonkaen University in the Northeast was opened in 1965, and the

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55 Ibid., p. 16.

Prince of Songkla University in the South was established in 1968. Other higher technical colleges have been established in rural regions, and some universities[56] in Bangkok have opened branches in outlying towns. Other higher education institutions, including teacher colleges, higher technical institutes, institutes of commerce and business administration, police cadet schools, and the military academy, were expanded.

In 1959 the Asian Institute of Technology was founded in Bangkok under the South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) to offer masters-degree level training in six fields of engineering. The National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA) was established in the outskirts of Bangkok in 1966 to offer masters-degree level education in public administration, business administration, developmental economics, and management. Also, in 1964, the Southeast Asia

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56 There are at present ten universities in Thailand. Besides the three new universities in rural areas, they are Chulalongkorn University, 1916; Thammasat University (mainly concentrating on the advanced social sciences), 1933; Kasetsart University (started with Agriculture and Forestry), 1943; Silpakorn University (started with Fine Arts and National Culture), 1943; Ramkamhang University (a new university with no entrance examinations required), 1971; and Srinakarinwirot University (a union of the seven campuses of Colleges of Education--three in Bangkok, four in other cities, and the College of Physical Education), 1974.

Ministers of Education Secretariat (SEAMES) was founded in Bangkok to coordinate the views and recommendations of the ministers of education in the region. Through this organization plans were made to set up regional institutes for engineering, tropical medicine, agriculture, higher education, education in science and mathematics, English language instruction, book development, instructional materials and educational radio and television.[57]

The present organizational plan for national public education was designed in 1960. For the first time, planning stressed meeting the needs and interests of both individuals and the society. Consequently, provision in education for the public was broadened through various developments, many of which have been discussed earlier. According to the 1960 scheme and as the result of the Karachi conference,[58] compulsory education was expanded from four to seven years. Changes in the steps of formal education[59] are illustrated in the comparison below.

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57 USOM, p. 15.

58 Conference on "Education in Asian nations" was held in Karachi, Pakistan in 1960 with UNESCO sponsorship.

59 In Thai, "elementary" is "pratom suksa"; "secondary" is "mattayom suksa."

Figure 1

The Structure of Formal Education in Thailand

The system in effect from 1936 to 1960	The new 1960 system
4 years...Elementary*	4 years...Lower-elementary*
3 years...Lower-secondary	3 years...Upper-elementary*
3 years...Upper-secondary	3 years...Lower-secondary
2 years...Pre-university	2(3) years...Upper-secondary**

* = compulsory education
** = two years upper-secondary education for general (academic) school students and three years for vocational school students

As far as the program of study is concerned, subjects were regrouped under the 1960 plan. The present subject areas are the Thai language (formerly known as reading, writing, and composition), social studies (formerly known separately as history, geography, ethics, and civics), elementary science (formerly known as nature study), mathematics (formerly arithmetic in elementary schools), and art education (formerly, drawing, singing, and handicrafts). From the upper elementary level onward, English was made a required subject.

Health and physical education, the Thai language, elementary science, mathematics, and art education are the subjects taught at the lower-elementary level (grade 1-4). If any school at this level wants to offer courses in foreign languages or handicrafts, it can do so with the permission of the Ministry of Education. Recent developments permit more flexible schedules in elementary education by stating in the curriculum pamphlets (syllabi) that the schedules which are provided for each subject may be divided into smaller sections or enlarged by combining subjects together into broader fields.[60] For the upper-elementary level (grade 5-7), two more subjects, English and handicrafts, are required. Students may choose the balance between these two subjects in that if they take three hours of English a week, they must take eight hours of handicrafts and vice versa. In both the lower and upper elementary levels, schools are required to provide extra-curricular activities such as scouting and Junior Red-Cross in addition to their regular schedules.[61]

As stated in the 1960 plan, two main streams of education were provided at the lower-secondary level (grades 8-10):

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60 Ministry of Education. Syllabus for Lower Elementary Level Grade 1-4. Bangkok: Kurusabha Press, 1971.

61 Ibid.

general (academic) and vocational. Presently, however, these divisions exist only at the upper-secondary level, since the vocational stream has just recently been eliminated from the lower-secondary curriculum.[62] Students who choose to continue their education at the lower-secondary level may enter either general schools or comprehensive schools, the latter offering both general and vocational education. Students in academic schools must take "practical arts" and participate in special activities such as scouting, clubs for young farmers, science clubs, or Thai cultural affairs clubs.[63]

On the upper-secondary level, the general education program is further divided into three sub-streams: science, arts, and general tasks. Some schools offer only the first two sub-streams, but some offer all three. The common core for both academic and vocational programs includes the Thai language, English, social studies, and mathematics. Health and physical education have been eliminated on this upper-secondary level.[64]

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62 The author became aware of this change after completing this research. Information regarding this change is not yet readily available for study in this country.

63 Ministry of Education. Syllabus for Lower Secondary Level, Grade 8-10. Bangkok: Kurusabha Press, 1973.

64 Ministry of Education. Syllabus for Upper Secondary Level, Grade 11-12 (13). Bangkok: Kurusabha Press, 1973.

The most novel change in secondary education. In 1959 the United States Operation Mission (USOM) ceased providing the funding for one experimental school. Since 1960, however, the comprehensive high school system has been developing, the curriculum of which combines both academic and pre-vocational subjects. This type of school is mainly intended to meet the needs of those who may not continue their education in a college or university, but it is by no means a barrier to such education. In 1960, the year in which the Thai general National Scheme of Education was announced, the first permanently established comprehensive school in Thailand was at Suranaree Wittaya, a girls' school in the city of Korat. This school attempted to continue the practices of the former USOM experimental school which had collapsed. Its operation was successful, since students seemed to enjoy the education they acquired, and the school was run smoothly.[65]

In this same year, the committee for comprehensive high schools at the lower-secondary level was established in the Ministry of Education. Shortly thereafter, a second comprehensive high school was set up a Rajaseema School, a boys' school in Korat. Beginning in 1966 comprehensive high schools were expanded with the help of a Canadian team.

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65 Cue, p. 8.

Plans are presently being made for twenty model schools to offer a variety of industrial arts courses together with regular college preparatory courses.

This development for comprehensive schools was based on recommendations from the Ministry report in 1965 entitled "Program for the Improvement of Secondary Education: Comprehensive School Project".[66] The report recommended that:

1. a more broadly-based curriculum be adopted to enable students to take a greater number and variety of exploratory courses since formerly vocational schools or programs have never been popular with the Thai people.

2. the boys' academic schools and the girls' vocational schools be combined into single administrative units.

3. the primary unit of secondary education be defined as the comprehensive high school with three areas of emphasis--required courses, elective courses, and pre-vocational courses--within a single curriculum.

The attitude that vocational education is inferior to academic education still prevails. One of the reasons for this is that to follow the academic stream and become a government official has traditionally been regarded as a more prestigious choice. Society respects people with higher education degrees, especially ones earned in Western countries. At present, attitudes seem to be changing.

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66 Wronski and Swandipanich, 1966, quoted by Gue, pp. 11-12.

The educational or career choice for secondary school youngsters also has been based on a limited amount of information. Hence, it often happens that the needs and aptitudes of students do not correlate with the job market. Comprehensive schools are designed to close this gap between the vocational and academic streams. Students are given a chance to explore their career interests.

Hopefully, the program will also improve the quality of instruction and administration through: (1) in-service programs for teachers and administrators, (2) improving the physical facilities to effectively offer a diversified curriculum which would open ways to reorganize courses of study so that students might select those appropriate to their aspirations and the needs of the country, and (3) the establishment of a center in which supervisors can do research, planning, and improvement of teaching in accordance with modern concepts of education.[67] This would allow more flexible ideas and practices for the benefit of the individual student.

Presently Thailand has two types of comprehensive high schools. The type discussed above is called Type I.

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67 Gue, p. 13.

Type II started in the rural areas in 1966, offering primarily agricultural and home economics curricula but also providing general education. Type I offers home economics, art education, and business, besides industrial arts and the required general courses.[68]

When the comprehensive programs are fully developed, the structure of lower-secondary education in Thailand will have to be modified. Lower-secondary vocational schools will no longer be separate from the academic ones. Nonetheless, the traditional general or academic schools will continue to exist without being expanded into comprehensive high schools.

The present administrative organization of education in Thailand. In order to illustrate the main aspects of the administrative organization of education in present day Thailand, a summary prepared by USOM is cited below.

> The Kingdom has been divided into twelve regions...each with a regional educational officer in charge and supervisory centers. In every region as well as every changwad (province) there is an advisory committee which considers problems related to education. An agency which legally has the right to coordinate all aspects of education is the National Educational Council created in 1959. In practice, however, it has limited itself primarily to matters pertaining to higher education.

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68 Comprehensive High School Type I & II. Written as a memorandum to Mr. Prayut Swadisingh, distributed at his funeral at Wat Sraket, 23 February 1969.

> Educational administration in Thailand is the responsibility of a number of different organizations. Currently, universities are under...the National Education Council... The Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for the secondary educational system. This includes public schools, which the government administers itself, and private ones, including missionary schools, which it oversees. The MOE is also responsible for adult education programs for technical and post-secondary teacher training institutions, and for the content and professional quality of all educational levels except the universities.
>
> Rural primary schools are mainly the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior..., which since 1966 has administered them through the Division of Rural Elementary Schools of the Department of Local Administration...There are 26,000 such schools...[69]

Emerging Thai educational thought. The history of educational development in Thailand shows a transition from early educational concern for religious and moral training toward the present emphasis on the practical development of individuals and society. The present 1960 National Education Scheme also integrates, at least theoretically, education and socio-economic development. This national level of educational thought can well be illustrated by quoting some articles in the published text of the scheme itself:

> Article 1: The Thai people shall be educated according to their individual capacities so that they

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69 USOM, pp. 5-6.

will be moral and cultured citizens with discipline and responsibility, with good health, mental and physical, and with a democratic outlook. They should be given knowledge and ability to carry out an occupation useful to their country and nation...

Article 3: Boys and girls should strive to gain knowledge and experience that will serve useful purposes in their lives.

Article 4: Education comprises four major areas:

1. Moral education. Aspects of education dealing with ethics and refinement, moral responsibility, and with the spirit of service.

2. Physical education...dealing with the promotion of good health, mental and physical, and sporting spirit.

3. Intellectual education...dealing with the improvement of thinking and with the acquisition of knowledge, techniques and principles conductive to useful and happy life.

4. Practical education...dealing with the habit of industry, perserverance, with the training of manual skills that are basic to good living and occupation.[70]

There has been much talk about education for the masses, education for economic prosperity, and education as a virtue in itself, as well as education for preserving cultural heritage and ethical values.[71] The beginning of the development of a new field of educational study in Thailand, namely the philosophy of education, has been noted.

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70 Audrey W. Gray, et al. Education in Thailand. Prepared by USOM. Bangkok, 1970. pp. 3-4.

71 Ekavidhya Nathalang. "Lessons Learned From a Century of Experience" in A Century of Experience. p. 128.

Some of the emerging thoughts expressed by a number of individuals and which are available to the public will be concisely discussed here to conclude the picture of present conditions of general education in Thailand.

Dr. Saroj Buasri is the first modern Thai theorist who has attempted to draw upon Buddhism in order to explain educational processes. According to Buasri, education from the Buddhist point of view is the development of Khandha 5. Khandha 5 refers to the five aggregates of man which are:

1. Rupa (body, including its function and behavior)
2. Vedana (feelings and senses)
3. Saññā (memory)
4. Sankhara (senses of values, attitudes)
5. Viññana (consciousness or knowledge, which is an awareness or knowing of meaning through sense experiences)[72]

Man is a learner who is able to develop the five aggregates by following Buddhist thought. Epistemologically, human knowledge comes from saññā (sanya) which means memory from perception through all senses, from thinking and doing, and from nana (yan) meaning insight. Through education and knowledge, humans should diminish as much as possible agusolamool or the causes of all evils in man, namely greed or desire to take possession by wrong doing (lobha), anger

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72 Saroj Buasri. Thought in Philosophy of Thai Education. Bangkok: Kurusabha Press, 1969. pp. 13-14.

and hatred (dosa), and delusion (moha), the major cause of both lobha and dosa. Delusion also includes misunderstanding, misconception, and ignorance (avijja). Whoever is able to eliminate such causes will be "free" and thus will have a good life. Complete freedom from suffering is freedom from greed, hatred, and delusion. Such a state is known as nibban or nirvana.

Such "change" implies there is always the hope to be better, progress is possible. Man learns to progress throughout life. The nature of learning, according to Buddhist principles stated more than 2,500 years ago, is similar to today's popular problem-solving or discovery methods. Learning starts with problematic situations. The Buddha's own story is an excellent example of this. Besides, his teaching of the Four Noble Truths, or facts of life, as Pra Srivisutmoli explains, also clarifies his method of reflective thinking. Dr. Buasri has compared this structure to the steps of modern problem-solving methods:

Figure 2

Buasri's Comparison of the Basic Buddhist Principles and the Modern Method of Problem-Solving[73]

The Four Noble Truths	Modern Problem-solving Method
1. Dukkha (suffering). This is a problem. What can be done to free a man from misery?...	1. A problematic situation...
2. Samudaya (origin of lust, greed, or craving...)...	2. Formulation of hypotheses...
3. Nirodha (extinction of suffering). Actual practices or activities must be carried out as planned, rejecting one that does not work...	3. Experimentation...
4. Magga (way). Conclusion is reached. Those within the realm of the Rightfold Path (Middle Way) can be practiced...	4. & 5. Analysis of data and conclusion.

The Eightfold Path (Middle Way or Magga 8) is categorized under three main headings:

A. Wisdom (Paññā or Panya). Intended for liberation.

1. Right Understanding. Understanding of the Four Noble Truth, roots of actions, three characteristics of life, the mundane level and the super-mundane level of practice, and law of causation (law of Karma)...

2. Right Thought. Thoughts which are free from tanha (craving, lust, ill-will, cruelty)...

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73 Buasri, Philosophy of Education, pp. 64-65.

B. Morality (Sila). Intended for purification.

3. Right Speech. Avoiding from lying, gossiping, harsh language, and useless talk. Gentle, soothing, courteous speech is good...

4. Right Action...

5. Right Livelihood...

C. Concentration (Smadhi). Intended for penetration.

6. Right Effort. Effort to avoid, to overcome, to develop, to maintain. Patient effort will lead to the intended end...

7. Right Mindfulness. Mostly for the super-mundane level (those who hope to renounce the wordly life and live to achieve complete freedom)...

8. Right Meditation. Totally on the super-mundane level.[74]

Furthermore, according to the scripture, individual differences in learning are recognized. The Buddha compared his disciples with four types of lotus-flowers:

A. The ones which have emerged complete from the water, ready to bloom. This type of disciple will have no difficulty in understanding or learning...

B. The ones which have just risen up to the water surface. This type of disciple will be able to succeed in learning without much difficulty...

C. The ones which are still submerged in the depths of the water. This type of disciple will have difficulty in succeeding, but there is a chance with an extra effort in teaching...

D. The ones which are at the muddy bottom of the lake, very likely to be eaten up by fish and tortoises. This type will not be able to achieve...[75]

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74 Ibid., pp. 23-36.

75 Ibid., pp. 49-50.

Phra Srivisutmoli further modifies the implication of Buddhist thought for education. An educated person is not only the person with wisdom, but with the ability to help others in society with appropriate ways of life. Karma acts as the motivation of "actions without tanha or agusolamool (causes of vice)". Educational stimuli are those that motivate or support learning. The external components of the stimuli include intimate friends, the broad social environment, and other people in general. The internal ones are thinking ability and the ability to analyze things as they are by discovering their causes and their effects. Finally, real education is the Middle Way.

According to Mr. Anuch Abhabhirom, editor of a Thai educational journal, the indigenous economic and political system must not be overlooked when an educational system needs improvement. Education should not be viewed as an individual investment, but as a series of on-going life activities. It should not be a piece of goods whose price keeps going up all the time so that, as a result, only a few can be educated. Education should be for life and be a life-long process.[76]

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76 Anuch Abhabhirom. "Philosophical Thought in Education" Journal of the National Education Commission, Philosophy of Education 1: 7-14, August-September 1973.

Dr. Ravi Bhavilai, an astronomer at Chulalongkorn University, asserts that the present state of Thai society is the result of the efforts made by materialists to create convenient living by employing the technology of "developed" countries such as the United States. Bhavilai would prefer that people concern themselves with ways to live well within the limitations of existing national resources. Before the word "technology" was known, the Thai people wove silk and raised silkworms. Now, as technology develops, Thailand must buy her silk thread from Japan. "How can we make the Thai people proud of farming, silkworm-raising, and vocational education?" he asks. Bhavilai also asserts that the dhammas are the principles of nature, including scientific laws. Education should encourage sufficient development of resources so that humans can live happily, which is the foundation on which their "minds" can then evolve toward experiencing Dhammas.[77]

Along the same line as Dr. Bhavilai, Dr. Wirayut Wichienchote of Prasanmitr College of Education, Srinakarinwirot University, also says that material development should be only one factor in the development of

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77 Ravi Bhavilai. "Ideals and Educational Concepts in Accordance with Changing Environments and Identity of Thai Society" Journal of National Education Commission 1: 15-27, August-September 1973.

"human minds". He points out that the statement which is frequently heard, "expanding modern civilization destroys the Thai culture", only displays two kinds of attitudes. One is a desire to cling to the old without concern with forces of change from other societies. The second attitude ignores the fact that materialistic development can only destroy Thai culture by its own tanha (causes of vice). There is a need, he claims, to develop a philosophy that leads to the diminishing of avijja (ignorance) and tanha as a whole. He proposes what he calls "a conceptual model of Thai educational philosophy" which would foster a "sungkom Araya-Niyom" or "Civilized Society". The political system would be Dhamma-thippatai--that is, all decisions would be based on research results and Dhammas; and the highest Dhammas would be regarded as the core of all activities.[78]

Obviously all of these emerging educational theories reflect, to some extent, the influences of Buddhism. There are increasingly more writings concerning various educational ideas such as informal education,[79] flexibility

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78 Wirayut Wichienchote. "A Conceptual Model of Thai Educational Philosophy" Journal of the National Education Commission 1: 36-53, August-September 1973.

79 Kowit Warapipat. "Informal Education" Social Science Review 9: 25-28, September 1973.

in education,[80] and an understanding of the philosophy of education itself.[81] How to bridge the gap between ideas or theories and actual implementation or practice is one of the important educational tasks that requires the cooperation of many agencies and individuals.

However, if one studies these theories carefully, it seems possible to combine them into one well-integrated educational aim. When these theories are carefully scrutinized, a high degree of connection or inter-relationship among their individual and social goals becomes apparent.

Concerns of Thai Educators

The Thai educational system is presently in a state of change. During this period, many problems are inevitably encountered by the educators. Some of these problems will now be surveyed and analyzed.

To begin with, the range of teaching and learning techniques is generally limited. Possibly the curriculum content has not always been well understood by the teachers,[82]

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80 Bunlua Tepayasuwan. "Flexible Education" Soon Suksa 18: 23-28, 1972.

81 S. Sivaluk. "Understanding in Educational Philosophy and Its Adaptation for Thailand" Pacharayasarn 6: 26-37, September-November, 1973.

82 Gray, et al., p. 189.

for if teachers knew their subject areas well in terms of their direct or indirect application or their connection to the environments, physical or social, and if they were imaginative enough, school lessons would become more interesting and more realistic. As a result of this apparent problem, what is taught in school is often considered relevant to the needs of society, particularly in the rural areas. As Hanks has observed in his study of a Thai village,

> Bang Chan does not resist change. Elders point to the progress they have witnessed over the past decade: crops are larger; weeds are fewer; old pests have disappeared; people may light their houses brightly at night and irrigate their fields in a few hours with a motor. Where individual initiative is responsible for these advances, people have learned the lessons as folk knowledge transmitted by neighbors and kinsmen. The school has brought none of these benefits.[83]

Moreover, since test scores have been the only criteria for promotion, admission to higher levels of education (with some exceptions), and graduation, the curriculum is oriented narrowly toward passing these examinations. This is especially true at the end of the twelfth grade when a nation-wide exam is administered for

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83 L.M. Hanks. "Indifference to Modern Education in a Thai Farming Community" in Cultural Relevance and Educational Issues: Reading in Anthopology and Education, eds. Francis A. Ianni and Edward Storey. Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1973. p. 371.

high school graduation along with nation-wide entrance exams to most universities.[84] Teachers and students tend to feel that daily work, class discussion, library work, research projects, or attention to low priority subjects such as art and music, are not important.[85] Rote learning prevails even though there are some attempts to modernize educational methodology. Dr. Adul Vichienchareon has said, "The four characteristics stressed in the Thai educational system are teachers as the ultimate source of knowledge; learning through memory; copying examples; and strong central control over schools and curriculum."[86] Currently Thai educators are working to introduce modern concepts more extensively into teaching and learning.

Some have said that external exams exist because of unqualified teachers. Students are not taught how to think independently, question or inquire, use their reasoning ability, make use of public facilities with understanding of the mechanics of different institutions, or even how to find jobs.[87] Some evidence of effective methods of

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84 According to hearsay information obtained by the author during the time of this writing, entrance examinations are expected to be abolished beginning in 1975.

85 Gray, et al., p. 190.

86 Adul Vichienchareon. "Our Stagnant Educational System" Social Science Review Bangkok; 4 (7) March-May 1970.

87 Nicholas Bennett. "Crisis in the Thai Educational System" Social Science Review 3: 39-52, September 1973.

teaching in the past were illustrated by Dr. Aree Sunhachawee. These include teaching the Thai language with a recognition of individual differences and utilizing teaching aids and social resources to make the lessons interesting. But these methods were used by only a few gifted teachers.[88] A frequent complaint is the insufficiency of funds and personnel to carry out research programs. Supervisory units are under-staffed and under-supplied. As a result, supervisors are unable to visit many rural schools more than once a year.[89] There is also doubt about the effectiveness of the advisory committees in each province and region whose job it is to consider educational problems in the area.

As for teaching aids, a film library in Bangkok has 12,000 titles, but only a few of these films have sound tracks in Thai. The provinces are often short of equipment with which to show films or filmstrips. The products prepared by the Department of Educational Techniques are only masters that can be copied; they are not distributed to the schools.[90]

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88 Aree Sunhachawee. "Evolution in Curriculum and Teaching" in A Century of Experience, pp. 111-112.

89 Gray, et al., p. 180.

90 Ibid., pp. 70-80.

Another major concern of the professional educators is that although the literacy rate for the Thai children has gone up to 79% and there are some good primary schools,[91] elementary education suffers from a high repeater-rate. This is particularly true in the areas where children live outside the central region of a province. It also occurs where a dialect different than the central Thai dialect used in the public schools is spoken at home, such as the Malay-Thai in the South and that known by the mountain children.

Many authorities assert that the poor educational standing of rural children results from family poverty and economic scarcity. Some, however, such as Wattana Wattanapan, believe that their problems are the result of poor teaching methods, since a great deal of evidence indicates that although the children are poor, they always come to school.[92] According to Wattanapan, teachers may be good people who have good intentions and work hard, but they lack a knowledge of good teaching methods. Also, there is not much information available

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91 Ekavidhya Nathalang. "Problems of Educational Quality at Elementary Level" Social Science Review 4: 12-19, October 1971.

92 Wattana Wattanapan. "What are the Observations from the Trip Surveying Effectiveness of Elementary Schools?" Social Science Review 9: 30-37.

about the Thai student population, their learning and development.[93] In the final analysis, Wattanapan recommends the improvement of teacher training institutions as the first step in improving education in Thailand.

Educators are also concerned because most Thai parents seem to leave school affairs almost entirely to the teachers. Many experienced teachers find that the parent-teacher associations are more a fad than they are evidence of solid cooperation between home and school.[94]

Elementary, secondary, and vocational education are administered by different departments. This lack of horizontal ties among the departments presents another problem. The official personnel in the Ministry of Education and the Department of Local Administration in the Ministry of Interior, whose authority covers most elementary education, do not sufficiently cooperate with the other agencies, and hence decentralization does not accomplish its intended goal.

Still another problem relates to attitudes toward vocational education as described above. Dr. Ekavidhya Nathalang, a leading Thai educator, notes that the training

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93 Gray, et al., p. 54.

94 Bennett, "Crisis in the Thai Educational System".

aim of early educational establishment for civil service persists with high priority,[95] even though, theoretically, the government has been trying to "persuade" students to enroll in vocational courses other than those that prepare for civil service. Also, since social status and income depend on educational accomplishment, about 98% of the students in elementary schools feel that they fail because they do not continue to the higher level.[96]

What is learned in school does not always prepare students either for continuing learning and self-study or for gainful employment. At present, each educational level is seen merely as a setp to the next higher level.[97] Farmers and gardeners do not see the need for book learning to help them in family economy.[98] Besides, as Nicholas Bennett, an American expert on Thai education, claims, the school system also unintentionally fosters segregation in Thai society by encouraging students with high marks to move from their original, rural surrounding into an urban surrounding full of materialism.[99]

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95 Nathalang, "Lessons", p. 127.

96 Bennett, p. 41.

97 Gray, et al., p. 191.

98 Sunhachawee, p. 107.

99 Bennett, p. 41.

As may be apparent, however, there has been an increasing concern over the philosophical implications of Thai education and trends. Mr. Anuch Abhabhirom, for instance, criticized the present philosophy of education in Thailand, however obscure it may be, as the philosophy of the oppressors. It promotes, he said, an elitist system. Since few have access to higher education, this type of philosophy causes the masses to depend on the few, the poor on the rich, and the rural on the urban. It is the philosophy of individualism, the advantages of which fall into the hands of opportunists. Competitive examinations are instruments to raise one's education and thus one's social status. Abhabhirom also believes that Thai educational philosophy has yielded to the West and Japan in being overly influenced by their economic and their cultural standards. The higher the education one has, the more one insults one's own country and thinks only of emulating other countries. The impact of Western education, especially at the higher levels of education, is not suitable for the Thai society. For, whenever improvement is needed, specialists always think of new instruments, new machines which cannot be produced in Thailand. He himself calls for a life-long educational process.

Yet despite the publication of statements such as Abhabhirom's, it still appears that Thailand lacks a well-developed philosophy of education. Educational theorists have attempted to offer some reflections and many of their ideas, which are influenced by Buddhism, are congruent with each other. But a definitive philosophical statement has yet to be produced.

For example, Dr. Buasri has proposed Buddhism as a foundation for Thai educational thought and has called for three types of education:

A. Education for national security through the development of economic, political, military, and socio-psychological efforts.

B. Education for the development of experimentation and research in education.

C. Education for the development of scientific and social intelligence.[100]

However, he has yet to achieve an integration of these two aspects of his thinking.

To develop the individual and society generally becomes the ultimate aim of education. Through formal education, school personnel hope to better achieve this aim.

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100 Buasri, "Toward a New Concept", p. 120.

Thus, the targets for educational development in Thailand were summarized by the Ministry of Education in 1970 as follows:

1. Achieving universal compulsory seven-year education by the late 1980s.

2. Expanding secondary and higher education.

3. Increasing the efficiency of all levels of education by reducing repeaters, drop-outs, and failure rates.

4. Improving and diversifying curriculum at all levels, particularly in the rural areas, so that what is learned is more directly applicable to the future lives of the children.

5. Improving the certification structure of the teaching force at all levels.

6. Expanding and improving education for rural development in order to lessen the wide disparities of incomes between the rural and urban areas, and between the agricultural and industrial sectors.

7. Expanding non-formal education rapidly in accordance with the concept of life-long education.[101]

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101 Ministry of Education. Report on Educational Development in Thailand. Bangkok: Kurusabha Press, 1970-71. pp. 1-2.